

Study tips for Language Learning Success

1. Learn vocabulary effectively

Vocabulary is the most essential element of communication. The more words you know, the more you can say and understand.

The absolute best way to learn vocabulary is through the use of flash cards *that you make yourself*. Purchase a set of 3 x 5 index cards and cut them in half. (This makes them small enough to carry everywhere.) Write a vocabulary word on the front and its English definition on the back. As you learn more information about each word (e.g. plural forms of nouns, principle parts of verbs), you can add these to the cards.

2. Break study time into smaller chunks

Try to study each day, and whenever possible, several times a day. This means, for instance, doing a few homework exercises each day rather than doing all homework assignments the night before they are due.

3. Set realistic expectations

It is natural to feel uncomfortable in a language class. You're used to being in classes where the mode of communication -- the language of instruction -- is a language you know very well .

In a language course, however, it is the mode of communication itself that is the focus of instruction. For this reason, a language course is different than most other courses you will ever take. **Not understanding** and **making mistakes** -- things that are negative learning indicators in other courses -- are a very natural part of the language learning process. Accept the fact that you will not understand everything. In fact, at the very beginning, you will not understand much at all.

Remember that during the initial period of adaptation your ear and your mind are adjusting to the sounds and the rhythm of the language. Though you will not understand all of what is being said, you will be amazed at your increasing ability to make sense of the language. Remember that the only way to learn the language is through practice, practice, and more practice; in the course of practicing you will make many errors ... and you will learn from them.

4. Practice language actively

Whenever possible, speak the language aloud rather than reciting it silently to yourself. Say vocabulary words out loud, read passages in the text aloud, do pronunciation activities orally and not just mentally. Write out the answers to activities rather than gliding through them in your mind. Read aloud entire sentences in an activity rather than just reading a fill-in response. Transferring language from your mind to your mouth is a skill that requires a great deal of practice.

5. Do homework conscientiously

When doing your homework, you have the luxury of time. Look up words and genders you don't know. Refer to charts and other resources available to you. This will reinforce the material and eventually it will become automatic. If you never look things up or simply guess, you will be strongly reinforcing errors and you will never learn proper forms and words. Read instructor feedback on homework and ask clarifying questions when necessary. Maximize the utility of your homework to your learning.

6. Form study groups

Meet regularly with classmates to work together on homework assignments, to learn vocabulary, to study for tests, or just to practice speaking the language. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses when it comes to language learning. Learning with others helps decrease knowledge gaps and gives you opportunities to actively discuss concepts and material covered in class, thereby increasing the chances that you will remember it. You will benefit from the knowledge and abilities of your classmates, as they will from yours.

7. Identify your learning style

Each person has his/her own learning style and everyone learns at a different pace. Try not to get frustrated if someone else in class seems to be progressing more quickly than you. You might find that you have a knack for grammar but have difficulty with speaking. Or you may find that you understand things perfectly in class, but when it comes to the homework assignments, you feel lost. Strive to identify your own personal strengths and let these help you in your learning process. If you are a visual learner, for example, write things down and try to associate words with images. At the same time, strive to identify your own personal learning barriers and make efforts to overcome them. For example, if you tend to be quiet in classes and often refrain from participating, force yourself to sit at the front of the classroom.